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WILLIAM WHITEMAN CARLTON TOPLEY.

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Address by Sir Henry Dale at the Memorial Service at St. Martin-in-the-Fields Church, on Thursday, February 3rd, 1944.

By the sudden death, in his 58th year, of William Whiteman Carlton Topley, his friends, his country and the world of science have suffered grievous loss. So much had seemed to depend on the normal expectation that he would continue, through many yet of the difficult years ahead, to render to Science and to the Nation the great services for which his special endowments of ability and character had become so clear to all.

We are here to pay our tribute of affection to the memory of our friend and colleague, and to honour a life of great achievement and selfless devotion, which has closed so early. What then shall we briefly recall of him, and how commemorate the great work which he has left unfinished?

We may first recall what seemed, in 1927, to be his great opportunity and the opening of his main life's work, when we acclaimed his appointment, still in the full vigour and brilliance of his early maturity, as the first Professor and Director of Bacteriology and Immunology at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. He was to hold this Chair long enough, indeed, to confirm and far to surpass the high hopes of those who had known his great qualities beforehand. Those who were directly his pupils there, felt the stimulus and the lasting influence of his teaching; and this was extended to a much wider circle by the great book on The Principles of Bacteriology and Immunity, which he wrote there in joint authorship with his intimate colleague, Professor Wilson. Then we shall recall the imposing record of his researches during this period; the masterly series by which, in co-operative enterprise with Professor Greenwood, he made so great an addition to knowledge of the conditions governing the natural spread and subsidence of an infection in a community, and gave to epidemiology a new and powerful method of experimental enquiry; and the more recent series, cut short by the war, in which he had attracted the interest of other colleagues to the preparation from bacteria of purified and stable antigens, and to the chemical study of their nature. The practical trial of some of these was even in hand when the war intervened.

The war, indeed, had already cast its advancing shadow over the last few years of this all too brief, though central period of Topley's career, diverting a growing share of his attention from his researches, to the conception and planning of

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the pathological service which the country would need, if the threatened war should come. In honouring his memory, then, we should remember his great contribution to the smooth efficiency with which the Emergency Public Health Service came into action at the moment when war was declared, with immeasurable benefit to the nation's health, under conditions which threatened it with so many unusual dangers. And it is likely that, when war has passed, a permanent impress of this experience on our national practice and on the nation's health, will remind us still of Topley's work and influence.

We should recall also Topley's service on the headquarters' staff of the Medical Research Council, where, for the first two years of the war, he worked with a tireless devotion, applying his wide range of expert knowledge to promote and organize researches and cognate activities which the problems of war demanded. And we recall that, even with this load of responsibility, he accepted for a time, and seemed to carry easily, the added duties of a Secretary of the Royal Society, as deputy to a colleague who was absent on an important mission. Thus he came to take a prominent part in the discussions which led to the appointment of the Scientific Advisory Committee to the Cabinet. Later he became one of the first Secretaries of this Committee, and took the chief part in drafting its first and most comprehensive Report, on the organization of scientific research under the Government in peace and in war; and later still he was to become a member of the Committee, on his appointment to the Secretaryship of the Agricultural Research Council.

Thus we are led to recall the opening, in 1941, of the new and final phase of Topley's service to Science and to the State. He had before him then the prospect of further and perhaps even greater achievement in the field of experimental medicine, in which all his experience had been gained and where he was already a recognized leader; and we, who had been looking with confidence to his continued inspiration and leadership there, heard almost with dismay of the invitation calling him to a new scientific allegiance. Would even he succeed, so late in his career, in the field of Agricultural Research, not only new to him in much of its scientific content, but beset with difficulties and traditions largely outside the range of his previous experience? We recognized his courage and his sense of duty, when we heard that he had accepted the vacant Secretaryship, but wondered whether he had dared too much. We need have had no doubt. In something over two years his wise and friendly handling of personal as well as technical problems, his broad scientific vision and practical understanding, had already given a new momentum to progress in this field of research, which he had entered at a time when the need was greater than ever before, and was matched by the opportunity. He seemed to move without delay into the full stride of his new career. He planned immediately for the importation of additional scientific ability of the highest

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order into research on problems bearing on Agriculture, and for such improvement of the general conditions of this research service as would attract into it a full and increasing share of brilliant young talent. Very soon he had secured the foundation, under distinguished leadership from other fields of science, of new research units in Animal Physiology, Insect Physiology, and the Enzyme Chemistry of Soils. He had quickly made clear his policy, to neglect no means of assisting the highest type of relevant academic work, while ensuring ample provision for researches in the field, with their more directly practical objectives; and he had seemed almost at once to be equally at home in discussing advanced research with the laboratory specialist, and in speaking in simple, human terms to the farmer of his practical problems. He was steadily strengthening the often precarious bridge between research and practice in Agriculture, and winning the confidence of both sides by his wisdom and his integrity.

And now to-day we mourn the loss of a dear friend, a gallant comrade, a brilliant and generous leader, whose thought was always for the cause and for those who could serve it, and never for the advancement of his own reputation or his own interests. We think of his kindly understanding, his genius for encouragement, and his frank friendliness; and we think with the deepest sympathy of the more intimate grief of those who have lost a devoted husband and father.

The commemoration which does most honour to such a life of achievement as that of our friend Topley, the memorial which he himself would most have desired, is that the great work which he had so well and soundly begun shall still go forward, and that the loss of his leadership shall not be allowed to deter those who follow, from the attainment of the aims to which he gave himself so unsparingly with all his powers, in a life devoted to the advancement of natural knowledge and to its use for the good of mankind.